ENGLISH 660-12180: RACE, NATION, IDENTITY, & BELONGING IN THE ETHNIC AMERICAN BILDUNGSROMAN

Professor Kirby Brown
Office: 523 PLC
Office Hours: M 2:00-4:50pm
Email: kbrown@uoregon.edu

Class Meetings
Office: 448 PLC

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Bildungsroman. Arguably one of the most widely recognized and hotly contested critical terms in literary studies, it has been read as everything from an organic, mimetic allegory of national community to an insidious instrument of social discipline. Its coincidence with the emergence of empire, nationalism, bourgeois individualism and modernity not only encourages interrogation of its normative representations of social order and subject formation. It also demands interpretive frameworks and comparative methodologies capable of addressing intersections between race, class, nation, gender/sexuality, and (settler)coloniality that consistently exceed the genre’s formal impulse toward containment, reconciliation, and closure.

Informed by such conversations and methods, this course explores the ethnic American bildungsroman in five novels from the modernist 1920s & 30s: Anzia Yezierska’s Bread Givers (1925), Nella Larsen’s Quicksand (1928), John Joseph Mathews’s Sundown (1934), Ameríco Paredes’s George Washington Gómez (ca. 1936), and Younghill Kang’s East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee (1937). Marked by post-War Anglo-nativism, intensified racial violence across the South and Southwest, drastic shifts in immigration and federal Indian policies, women’s suffrage, socialist agitation, and the cultural/literary influences of modernity and modernism, these writers chose the bildungsroman to examine the often violent contradictions of “American” identity for the racially-marked, ethnic-American citizen-subject.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Read literary texts with discernment, comprehension, and attention to structural, generic, and other conventions.
- Situate literary texts and writers within their appropriate historical, cultural, political, and literary contexts.
- Cultivate a historically nuanced grasp of some of the major issues, questions, and concerns of ethnic American literatures from the 1920s and 30s, especially as they relate to the relationships between race, nation, citizenship, belonging, and cultural form.
- Engage in thoughtful presentations, theoretically sophisticated discussions, and critical readings of such intersections in literary and scholarly work.
- Compose focused, analytic writing in clear, grammatical prose, drawing upon primary and secondary sources with proper acknowledgement and attribution.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Anzia Yezierska, Bread Givers (1925) (BG)
Nella Larsen, Quicksand (1928) (QS)
John Joseph Mathews, Sundown (1934) (SD)
Additional readings and other materials available via Canvas

**All primary course texts on reserve in the Knight Library**

**ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**
This course offers a variety of assignments by which your performance is assessed. These include facilitations of secondary materials, bi-weekly critical discussion postings (~500-750 words) and bi-weekly responses (~250 words), a research proposal/conference, a critical annotated bibliography (min. 10 sources), and a final research project/conference paper (10-12pp).

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION**
- Facilitation of Secondary Materials: 15%
- Weekly Critical Discussion Postings/Responses: 20%
- Research Proposal & Conference: 10%
- Critical Annotated Bibliography: 20%
- Final Conference Paper (10-12pp): 35%

**COURSE CONTENT AND INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSION**
Due to the ongoing histories/experiences of settler-colonialism, institutional racism, gender violence, state violence, dispossession, and incarceration that inform both our contemporary moment and our readings for the term, this course will openly engage these and related issues without censorship. If content makes attendance and participation impossible, please see me to make alternative arrangements.

**CLASS COMMUNICATION**
Get in the habit of checking your UO email account regularly (i.e. daily) as this will be our primary means of communication outside of class. Please be aware that I will not respond to emails sent after 5pm or on the weekend until the next weekday.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER**
In the case of inclement weather, please check the UO homepage, UO Alerts Blog, and local weather stations for information on travel, closures and cancellations. If inclement weather makes traveling to campus difficult, I will notify you by email about whether we are holding class. Whether or not I decide to hold class, you should use your own judgment about the safety of traveling to campus.

**INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY**
If you have a documented need that necessitates accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible and request that a counselor at the Accessible Education Center send a letter verifying your requests.

**TITLE IX POLICY AND REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES**
The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Consequently, all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Employees are NOT required to reveal the names of survivors, however.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**
The University Student Conduct Code defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Additional information
about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available here.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings / Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td>Theoretical Mash-Up, Part 1: Race, Nation, and Bildung</td>
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<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td>Omi &amp; Winant, “Racial Formation”; Bhabha, “DissimiNation”; Boes, “The Limits of National Form” (Canvas); Bolaki, from Unsettling the Bildungsroman</td>
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<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>Discussion Posts (DP) 1: Group A</td>
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<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Discussion Responses (DR) 1: Group B</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td>Immigration, Assimilation, and the Limits of Whiteness</td>
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<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>Anzia Yezierska, Bread Givers</td>
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<td>FACILITATIONS</td>
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<td>Ebest, “AY &amp; the Popular Periodical Debate Over the Jews”</td>
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<td>Dayton-Wood, “AY and the Problem of Progressive Education”</td>
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<td>Simpson, “AY’s Bread Givers and the Space of White Racial Manufacture”</td>
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<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>DP1: Group B</td>
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<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td>DR1: Group A</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
<td>Gender, Race, Region, and the Global Circulation of Blackness</td>
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<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>Finish discussion of Bread Givers; Begin Nella Larsen, Quicksand</td>
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<td>FACILITATIONS</td>
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<td>Hutchinson, “The Novel of the Negro Renaissance”</td>
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<td>Brickhouse, “NL and the Intertextual Geographies of Quicksand”</td>
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<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>DP2: Group A</td>
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<td>Oct. 13</td>
<td>DR2: Group B</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
<td>Quicksand (continued)</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>FACILITATIONS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mancharia, “Queering Helga Crane: Black Nativism and NL’s Quicksand”</td>
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<td>Labbé, “The ‘Terrible Honesty’ of Black Women’s Work in Quicksand”</td>
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<td>Oct. 17–20</td>
<td>Individual Research Proposal Conferences: Schedule w/Prof. Brown</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
<td>Race, Modernity, (Alie)Nation, and the Problem of Bildung from Indian Country</td>
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<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td>John Joseph Mathews, Sundown</td>
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<td>FACILITATIONS</td>
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<td>Warrior, “Democratic Vistas of the Osage Constitutional Crisis” (Canvas)</td>
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<td>Owens, “Maps of the Mind: John Joseph Mathews &amp; D’Arcy McNickle” (Canvas)</td>
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Oct. 25  DP2: Group B
Oct. 26  DR2: Group A

Week 6
Oct. 30  *Sundown* (continued)

FACILITATIONS
Schedler, “John Joseph Mathews: Tribal Modernism”
Lutinski, “*Tribes of Men: John Joseph Mathews and Indian Internationalism*”
Rifkin, “The Duration of the Land: The Queerness of Spacetime in *Sundown*.”

Nov. 1  DP3: Group A
Nov. 3  DR3: Group B

Week 7  *Bildung in the Borderlands: Race, Gender, Nation, and Place*
Nov. 6  Americo Paredes, *George Washington Gomez: A Mexicotexan Novel*

FACILITATIONS
Sheridan, “Contested Citizenship: National Identity and the Mexican Immigration Debates of the 1920s” (Canvas)
Sorenson, “The Anti-Corrido of *GWG*: A Narrative of Emergent Subject Formation” (Canvas)

Nov. 10  Critical Annotated Bibliography Due (5pm)

Week 8
Nov. 13  *George Washington Gomez* (continued)

FACILITATIONS
Gonzalez, “‘Texanizing Texans’: Texas Centennial Discourses of Racial Pedagogy”
R. Saldívar, “Checkerboard of Consciousness in *George Washington Gomez*” (Canvas)
Sandra Soto, “Americo Paredes and the De-Mastery of Desire” (Canvas)

Nov. 15  DP3: Group B
Nov. 17  DR3: Group A

Week 9  *Bildung from the East: Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Problem of Modernity*
Nov 20  Younghill Kang’s *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee*

FACILITATIONS
Lawrence and Cheung, “Introduction” from *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature*
Lee, “The Unmaking of an Oriental Yankee” (in *EGW*)

Nov. 22  Draft of research project due (5pm)

Week 10
Nov. 27  *East Goes West* (continued)
FACILITATIONS
Kuo, “Masculine Racial Formations in Younghill Kang’s East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee” (Canvas)

Week 11
Dec. 7 Revised research projects due on Canvas by 5pm